

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRI NATIONAL COUNCIL CONFIRMS SOLITARY POSITION

REF: ROME 16442

1. DURING ITS OCTOBER 9-10 MEETING, THE ITALIAN REPUBLICAN PARTY (PRI) NATIONAL COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE CRITICAL AND INDEPENDENT LINE TAKEN BY PARTY PRESIDENT UGO LA MALFA TOWARD BOTH THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICIES AND THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. AS HAD SEEMED LIKELY (SEE REFTTEL), THE NATIONAL COUNCIL AVOIDED ANY HINT OF EXPLICIT CRITICISM OF LA MALFA, BUT DID INTERPRET THE PUBLIC POSITIONS OF THE PARTY'S HISTORIC LEADER IN A MANNER CALCULATED TO REASSURE THOSE ALARMED BY THE MORE EXTREME OF LA MALFA'S STATEMENTS. FINALLY, THE COUNCIL APPROVED THE PROPOSAL OF THE PARTY DIRECTORATE TO ASSOCIATE THE PRI WITH THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC AND LIBERAL PARTIES. THIS FEDERATION, BORN IN STUTTGART IN MARCH 1976, WILL PLAY A ROLE IN THE 1978 ELECTIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

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2. THE POSITIVE NOTE WAS FIRST SOUNDED BY THE PRI NEWSPAPER IN A

FRONTPAGE EDITORIAL ON THE OPENING DAY OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING. THAT ARTICLE CREDITED THE PRI'S DIRECTORATE'S ADMONITION OF EARLIER IN THE WEEK WITH HAVING CALLED ATTENTION TO A SITUATION WHICH "COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN UNDERESTIMATED." AS A RESULT, THE PAPER CLAIMED, THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM AS FINALLY ANNOUNCED WAS SOLIDER THAN HAD BEEN EXPECTED, AND THE PCI'S DIRECTORATE APPROVED A DOCUMENT WHICH EXHIBITED A CONFORTING SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. (COMMENT: THIS APPARENTLY REFERS TO THE PCI'S NEW EMPHASIS ON THE NECESSITY TO REDUCE INFLATION.) LIKE OTHER DECLARATIONS ISSUING FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING, THE EDITORIAL AVOIDED THREATENING INTRANSIGENT OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES, AND STRESSED THE PRI'S SELF-CONCEPTION OF ITS ROLE AS CONSCIENCE OF THE NATION.

3. IN DESCRIBING THE PRI'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE THREE LARGEST POLITICAL PARTIES, THE COUNCIL AVOIDED THE HARSH TONES USED IN THE DECLARATIONS OF EARLIER IN THE WEEK. RATHER, PARTY SECRETARY BIASINI TRACED THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND EMPHASIZED AGAIN THE NEED FOR REPUBLICAN AUTONOMY AND RESERVE WITH REGARD TO, IN EQUAL MEASURE, THE DC, PCI AND PSI. BIASINI STRESSED THAT INDEPENDENCE FROM ALL THE OTHER PARTIES MEANS THAT THE PRI MUST DEVELOP ITS OWN CAPACITY TO CRITICIZE, ELABORATE AND PROPOSE POLICY. A NON-POLEMICAL ATTITUDE WAS ALSO REFLECTED IN THE WORDING OF THE COUNCIL'S CONCLUSIVE DOCUMENT, WHICH OBSERVED THAT SINCE, FORMAL DENIALS NOTWITHSTANDING, NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE DC AND THE PCI ARE GOING ON AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT, THE ROLE OF THE PRI CONSISTS IN MAINTAINING "JUDGMENT FROM A POSITION OF ABSOLUTE AUTONOMY ON EVERY PROBLEM, WITH CONSTANT REFERENCE TO THE SUPREME DEMOCRATIC INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY."

4. INDICATIONS ARE THE PRI INTEREST DURING THE COMING WEEKS WILL CENTER AROUND TWO ASPECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S AUSTERITY PROGRAM. FIRST, THE REPUBLICANS WILL INSIST THAT THE GOVERNMENT TAKE ADEQUATE MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE MONETARY PROBLEMS WHICH WILL ARISE WHEN THE TEMPORARY TAX ON FOREIGN EXCHANGE DEALINGS RUNS OUT. SECONDLY, THE PRI IS CALLING UPON THE GOVERNMENT, THE PCI AND THE LABOR FEDERATIONS TO ADMIT THAT NO AUSTERITY PROGRAM CAN BE EFFECTIVE UNLESS RESTRICTIVE MEASURES ARE EXTENDED BEYOND THE UPPER AND MIDDLE CLASSES TO INCLUDE ALSO THOSE ON THE LOWER END OF THE INCOME SCALE.

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5. COMMENT. WHENEVER UGO LA MALFA SAYS THAT A DC-PCI HISTORIC COMPROMISE IS "INEVITABLE" OR, AS HE MORE RECENTLY PUT IT, "ALREADY EXISTS", THERE FOLLOWS A PUBLIC CONTROVERSY WHICH GENERATES MORE HEAT THAN LIGHT. IN THE COMING MONTHS. HOWEVER, THE PRI MAY COME TO PLAY A MUCH MORE POSITIVE ROLE. BY STAYING FREE OF TIES TO ANY OF THE THREE LARGER PARTIES, THE PRI, THE ONLY LAY PARTY NOT DISCREDITED TO SOME EXTENT BY THE RESULTS OF THE JUNE ELECTIONS,

CAN BE A USEFUL WATCHDOG AGAINST ANY TENDENCY TO DEVELOP A
DC-PCI-PSI PARLIAMENTARY CONDOMINIUM WHICH MIGHT AVOID CONFRONTING
HARSH CHOICES.VOLPE

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